Composing Ethnography

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COMPOSING ETHNOGRAPHY

Tom O'Dell and Robert Willim

Ethnography involves a series of competencies, methods, and theoretically anchored stances whose composition shift as they are moved from one context to another. This article works to delineate new ways of explaining the manner in which academics have tended to work with ethnographic practices in an attempt to produce illuminative cultural analyses. As part of this endeavor the text goes beyond the realms of the traditional classroom setting to examine the manner in which ethnography is used outside of the academy as a mode of expression, and it reflects upon the implications these movements may have for what is ultimately taught in the classroom. While doing this, the paper proposes a need to rethink ethnography as compositional practice.

Keywords: composing ethnography, cultural analysis, education, art, fieldwork

Ethnography survived its infancy. Not so long ago it received a papal blessed from A.G. Lafley, the CEO of P&G. And with this CEOs and CMOs everywhere began to give the attention new attention. This is, in other words, a crucial moment in the history of the method. It will either grow up to dispatch the larger and more important responsibilities it is now assigned. Or it will continue its descent into naive empiricism, charismatic performance, or the commodity basement. (McCracken 2009: 8)

Ethnography is keenly suited to design, because it speaks to personal experience and intuition. Designers must draw heavily upon such personal knowledge to express their creativity. Good ethnography can inspire good design. (Reese 2004: 53)

Ethnography has long been a method tightly bound to the practice of anthropology.* But it is increasingly leaving the realm of academic anthropology and finding relevance in the world of business as well as in segments of the creative industries and arts. Individuals working in such fields as design, marketing, and business administration are increasingly pointing to ethnography as an underused methodological approach to research and development (El-Amir & Burt 2010; Wasson 2000). In this context, we find a growing cadre of appreciative practitioners who speak glowingly of "user-driven innovation" and point to the potential ethnography has of putting businesses more squarely in touch with the needs, desires, and everyday life circumstances of their customers. The case may be that ethnography involves a series of competencies, methods, and theoretically anchored stances whose composition shift as they are moved from one context to another, but in the world beyond the acad-

emy, ethnography is often spoken and written about as if it were something akin to a secret weapon, that can give a business a tactical advantage in the market.

As ethnologists and educators working in Scandinavia, we are increasingly struck by the fact that "the secret" is out of the bag. Ethnography is not only well on its way to becoming a staple commodity in the corporate worlds of product development and marketing, but partially as a consequence of this it is also something that university students are searching for as part of their education. This is, in and of itself, nothing new. The students we have taught in ethnology for the past few decades have always appreciated the opportunity to learn ethnographic methods, go into the field, and conduct their own fieldwork based projects. What is new, however, is that where the bulk of our students were once entirely focused upon the production of academically oriented studies, we now find ourselves working in a context where the majority of our students are interested in applied forms of ethnography oriented towards solving concrete problems in people's everyday lives, as well as in the context of working life.

This situation in Scandinavia is, in part, an outcome of the recent development of new educational programs in applied ethnology, such as, for example, the international Master Program in Applied Cultural Analysis (MACA) offered jointly by the universities of Lund and Copenhagen.[1] But this development is also a reflection of the current context in which Scandinavian ethnology now operates; a context in which disciplines in the humanities and social sciences are expected to justify their existence (and funding) in terms of usefulness, and in which students increasingly want explicitly to know how their education will enhance their prospects of obtaining employment upon graduation (Rider 2008; O'Dell 2008). In this context, ethnography has become not only a buzz word in the world of business, but a hot commodity which departments of anthropology and ethnology find that they can use to attract students.

As interest in ethnography has moved in this direction, it has also had the propensity to attract students with academic backgrounds slightly beyond the ordinary disciplinary folds of anthropology and ethnology coming from such fields as marketing, political science, and journalism, and with their interest in ethnography, we find new pedagogic challenges. Many of these students, for example, have a rather instrumental attitude towards ethnography and they commonly ask, "How can I use this to further my goals?" They have also a rather opaque understanding of the role cultural theory plays in the development of an interpretively insightful cultural analysis.

In what follows we want to begin by exploring the manner in which we might be able to reformulate (and communicate) our understanding of ethnography as an aspect of cultural analysis for the growing number of students we encounter who are concerned with life after academia. Our aim here is primarily to delineate new ways of explaining the manner in which academics have tended to work with ethnographic practices in an attempt to produce illuminative cultural analyses. Following this, we go beyond the realms of the traditional classroom setting to examine the manner in which ethnography is used outside of the academy as a mode of expression, and we reflect upon the implications these movements may have for what we ultimately teach in the classroom. Our ambition is to address the question of what ethnography "can be" when appropriated into new contexts. While the merits of applied anthropology have been debated for the better part of the past century (see O'Dell 2009), we opt to acknowledge those debates, but also move beyond them and ask:

- what can we learn from those who use ethnography outside of the academy,
- how do the processes of appropriation affect ethnography, and, having studied them,
- what can we bring back into the academy to further our own methods as well as those of our students?[2]

In this regard, a very important and central focus of this article concerns the issues of education and pedagogy, and how we can better prepare coming generations of graduates to use ethnography – creatively, productively, and responsibly – outside of as well as inside the academy.

The Composition: From Field Notebooks to Notes in a Score

Speak of ethnography and one enters an ambivalent world which, at times, seems to address issues of representation and writing (Calzadilla & Marcus 2006; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Macdonald & Basu 2007; Schneider 2008), and, at others, concerns questions of methods of investigation (Davies 2008; Handwerker 2001; Sunderland & Denny 2007). To be sure, the two are intimately entangled, but there is a common perception of the process of ethnography as a rather linear process of observing and collecting empirical materials which leads to the act of writing. This is part and parcel of the problem of "naïve empiricism" which McCracken warns us of (see the introductory quote above). As a means of moving us away from this position we wish to destabilize this linearity by arguing for a need to understand the way ethnographies evolve as compositions, not produced in any one place but developing out of ethnographic activities occurring in multiple overlapping sites.

Long term fieldwork projects (working in the field for a year or two) may be an important part of the anthropological habitus as well as an idealized practice and potential rite of passage. But the reality facing a growing number of anthropologists attests to the fact that ethnography is increasingly finding its way into vastly different types of research projects and institutional settings. Nowadays, fewer and fewer of these projects are anything like the long term fieldworks associated with classic anthropologists such as Edward Evans-Pritchard who, in the mid-twentieth century, could spend up to a decade working on the same study of a society (Hannerz 2003: 201f.). Instead, a growing amount of the ethnography that is conducted today is, as Ulf Hannerz describes it, "an art of the possible" (ibid.: 212): an outcome of the ethnographic work that anthropologists – in light of their teaching responsibilities, administrative duties, and other constraints of daily and working life – are capable of pulling together for longer, but more often shorter, periods of time.

Phantasmagoria of the Evans-Pritchard style of anthropological fieldwork can be stifling, leaving researchers and scholars with the feeling of never having time to conduct a thorough study. Discussions concerning the character of ethnographic fieldwork are thriving within anthropology (cf. Coleman & Collins 2006; Schneider & Wright 2010), but the haunting thought of the good old extended stint of thorough fieldwork looms still over many an anthropological and ethnographic endeavor, and with it the linear notion of going to the field, coming home, and writing up results.

The potential to subvert this misrepresentative impression of linearity does, however, lie close at hand, although it needs to be developed and made more explicit. Within Swedish ethnology, for example, there exists a slightly different relation to fieldwork than in many more traditional educational programs in anthropology. Fieldwork is usually not done in distant places, and nor does it come as the ultimate rite of passage in the making of a professional. Students, from the very first semester of their education, are expected to conduct (and struggle with) ethnography in their immediate surroundings. They do this at the same time that they read and learn about the history and genealogies of fieldwork as well as the many forms ethnographic practice can take. Theory, methods, "the field", the classroom, and text production lie continuously jumbled and in juxtaposition to one another. Working in this way, students' understanding of ethnography is framed as "the art of the possible" and not some holy grail that the student is first allowed to come into contact with after years of training and reading in the classroom. This fosters a reflexivity over, and competence with, the variations and context dependencies of any empirical and analytical work. Swedish ethnology is not unique, and similar relations to fieldwork can be found in many anthropological programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. What is lacking in all of this, however, and what we must address more explicitly, is an explanation of the implications of the art of the possible as well as a pedagogically oriented, performative stance that consciously undermines and illuminates the problems with linear representations of ethnography.

Beyond perceptions of the imagined linearity of ethnographic practice, however, another factor in-

hibiting the development of a broader understanding of ethnography and its potential lies in the fact that from the beginning, students of ethnography are encouraged to sharpen their skills at producing thick descriptions and empirically anchored texts. But the act of producing thick description has all too often emphasized an overly observationalist stance, as though a good thick description were merely a matter of getting all the details down on paper. Echoing this perception, we all too often encounter comments such as, "The problem with such thick description is that there are no stopping points, no way of knowing when the description is thick enough" (Cyrenne 2006: 319), as if the objective of ethnography and thick description were to observe and describe "it all". In writing about thick description, Geertz himself warned of the propensity for the anthropological endeavor to be construed in this oversimplified manner (1973: 9), and he worked to emphasize the complex web of activities that went into the making of ethnography. But a fundamental problem here is the manner in which ethnography has come to be so metaphorically, practically, and emphatically aligned with writing and the art of documentary authorship, which themselves are presumed to be (or at least metaphorically framed as) the outcome of observationalist practices, or modes of "naïve empiricism".

We need to rethink this process and better communicate it to our students as a combination of methodological, analytical, and representational activities. We have struggled with "the crisis of representation" and debated the limits of "writing culture" (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Nonetheless, writing still remains the preferred mode of representation for anthropologists to use and discuss. But, as Christopher Kelty has argued (Kelty et al. 2009), writing might not be the best way for us to envision the representational practice of ethnography. Instead of writing, he urges us to think of ethnography as the act of composition. As he explains:

> We say 'composition' here because it is more inclusive than 'writing' (paintings, musical works, and software all need to be composed, as poetry and novels do). Writing implies the textual and narrative organization of languages…, but it leaves out the composition of images and sounds, or especially how other kinds of objects are composed as part of an ethnographic project. (2009: 186)

Kelty and his peers are primarily interested in questions pertaining to the Internet in which images, sounds, and words all coexist. And while the notion of composition may help him take these dimensions of his field into account, he does not reflect over the variety of ways different forms of expression can engage processes of composition. What if we jumble our metaphors? We think of the formation of texts in terms of continuous "rewriting", while the making of films involves cutting, splicing, and editing, and music may awake association to the layering and remixing of sound. How might we mix the practices from these different forms of creation and expression in order to think of ethnographies in terms of cutting, editing, mixing and layering as well as rewriting? What types of splicing activities are necessary for us to create a sense of proximity to the field?

A couple of decades ago, George Marcus argued for ways of coupling cinematic imaginations to ethnographic writing and of including modernist sensibilities (1990). By discussing *intellectual montage*, a concept derived from filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, he discussed experimental ethnography at the end of the twentieth century and the uses of polyphony, fragmentation and reflexivity in writing. At the core of these experiments lay combinatory montage practices and creative juxtapositions. In a dialogue which took place twenty years later with the curator Tarek Elhaik, however, Marcus argued that "prevalent strategies of juxtaposition as the core of ethnographic styles of representation and analytics have become flat" (Elhaik & Marcus 2010: 187). According to Marcus, one way to move beyond this "flatness" might be to work more with artistic approaches, such as installations, and curatorial practices – something he has approached recently in a number of texts (Calzadilla & Marcus 2006; Marcus 2010). By using the term composition, our ambition is to include ideas about montage and connections between art and ethnography – a point we shall address more directly in just a moment.

By moving in this compositional direction and contesting the notion of ethnographic fieldwork as a linear project that is all too often dominated by an overly observationalist stance, our intention is to move one step further away from viewing ethnography as a singular project. Our use of the concept of composition is to a certain extent in line with the manner in which Bruno Latour invokes the term in a recent attempt to write his own "Compositionist Manifesto". As he points out:

> Even though the word 'composition' is a bit too long and windy, what is nice is that it underlines that things have to be put together (Latin *componere*) while retaining their heterogeneity. Also it is connected with composure; it has clear roots in art, painting, music, theater, dance, and thus is associated with choreography and scenography; it is not too far from 'compromise' and 'compromising' retaining with it a certain diplomatic and prudential flavor. (Latour 2010: 473f.)

For Latour, the compositionist manifesto is intended as a tool with which to confront the metaphysics of the modern world, the rationality of the natural sciences and the manner in which they contribute jointly to a prevailing view of nature as an intact whole. As Latour sees it, the problem with the ongoing climate debate is that nature, as it is constructed in science and politics, is based on the conception that "nature is *always already assembled*" (ibid.: 482, italics in original). Here we see parallels to the manner in which the ethnographic field is so often conceived of as an external whole, and the manner in which ethnographic practices are, in a parallel fashion, portrayed as a logically ordered set of integrated activities leading to the production of the final text.[3] But more than logically ordered wholes, ethnographies are made out of a multitude of bits and pieces – which are more or less consciously coproduced in collaboration with informants, and through confrontation with various phenomena and experiences – that are not "naturally" connected, but which have to be linked together by the ethnographer.

What we as cultural analysts usually focus upon are discussions of the completed wholes (our books and articles), but before "wholes" are created, what happens in the spaces between projects? Or at the junctures and disjunctures in which our methodological activities do not seem to work, or that leave us questioning our own capabilities? How do we compose – and compromise together – our ethnographies?

In order to begin unpacking these questions we shall turn to two ethnographic examples from our own work. For purposes of argumentation, we call them "art and concept driven ethnography" and "ethnography on demand". After discussing some of the practices of composition involved in the making of these ethnographies, we shall turn to the world of ethnography beyond the academy. We shall describe each "case study" separately, as if they represented uniquely different forms of ethnographic praxes, but our ambition is not to construct a taxonomy of ethnography, nor is it to assert that there are "pure" ethnographic forms. Our intention is merely to illustrate a few of the different kinds of compositional processes that are at work in many ethnographies.

Industrial Cool: Art and Concept Driven Ethnography

In a recent study of the ways earlier manufacturing industries have been aesthetiziced in the Western world, Robert Willim used the concept *industrial cool* as a driving force. The combination of words "industrial" and "cool" were used in order to accentuate the ways industries in a time often thought of as postindustrial are increasingly associated with pleasure and leisure. In addition to this, the word "cool" also tends to connote the ways in which many industries are experienced as something distant, something that is metaphorically disappearing in the historical rear view mirror.

The idea started as an art and music project. Willim used the words industrial cool to curate and produce a number of art pieces, beginning with a CD compilation that included 20 electronica artists from different parts of the world.[4] Sound and video were captured in a sugar plant in southern Sweden. The sounds were then used by the different artists in their production of tracks for the CD. The character of the

tracks ranged from ambient pieces and sound art to more club oriented electronic music. Here, ideas of aesthetizication, appropriation, manipulation, and the remixing of material from industrial contexts were dominant, thus reflecting a series of ideas linked to industrial cool. As the art project developed, ideas concerning an ethnographically anchored research project successively emerged (Willim 2005, 2008). In the research project – which focused upon the manner in which old factories were finding new cultural life as hip galleries, hot tourist attractions, and trendy work spaces for the creative industries – the concept industrial cool, as well as the experiences from the art project, worked simultaneously to drive the ethnographic work forward. The process was characterized by a continuous ambulation between observations made in a series of industrial localities, between discussions held with colleagues, and between theoretical impetuses ranging from the field of cultural heritage to those of the cultural economy.

There are congruities between the ways digital computer based tools were utilized in the music and art project and the arrangement of the ethnographic cultural analysis conducted.[5] When producing the music a number of digital filters and effects were applied to the sonic raw material, tools that transformed the material. The collected samples were also spliced and layered into compositions in order to gain new form and potential. The ethnography was organized in a similar fashion. The concept industrial cool can in itself be seen as a filter or effect applied to the observed world. In many ways, the research project was also comprised of *looping*, *splicing* and *layering* activities as Willim moved between ethnographic sites and layered these experiences with those derived from diverse literary exoduses as well as with reflections emerging from artistic practice.

The field out of which industrial cool evolved stemmed from the art project, but along the way it came to be more and more organized and facilitated by the concept itself. In this sense, one could say that the project was highly *concept driven* to the extent that

the project endeavored to test the degree to which a problematization of industrial cool could further our understanding of everyday life, cultural heritage and tourism in late modernity. It was also driven by a desire to test the limits of the concept in a search for answers to such questions as: How far can this concept be used? What happens when the concept travels between different framings (cf. Bal 2002)? What kind of perspective on the world does industrial cool induce? Theoretical inspiration was taken from scholars studying urban transformations, culture and economy, cultural heritage, etc., and these were composed and merged with observations in a variety of contexts as well as with artistic explorations.

Ethnography on Demand

The second project we wish to address began at the request of a representative for a large hotel chain. The representative had heard O'Dell present an open, public lecture on culture and the experience economy, and had asked him to give a keynote address at an international spa conference on the experiences of spa patrons. Responding to the fact that O'Dell had never been to a spa, the representative offered to open one of her chain's spas to him, and to provide him with access to employees, facilities, and even treatments.

But interviewing proved difficult. Both the personnel and the patrons of spas had difficulty putting their experiences into words. "We just did nothing," or "We just relaxed," or "They come here to be pampered," were common responses to questions, but when pressed further people had a difficult time explaining what they meant.

Interviews had to be intertwined with fieldwork, but doing fieldwork here meant learning the field. What do people usually wear under their terry cloth robes? When is a bathing suit appropriate, and when is it not? What does one wear to an aloe vera treatment, a seaweed massage, or a floating session? Days were spent sitting in sun chairs watching other people sit in sun chairs … doing nothing (or so it seemed). The ethnographer's capacity to observe, even if it had been developed over years of practice, seemed to fail. Thus, the two most predominant anthropological methods of data collection – interviewing and participant observation – had failed to produce any immedi-

ate insight of value. Anxiety became a driving force continuously troubling the ethnographer. "When is something going to happen?" "What am I going to write about this?" The field itself rapidly expanded to several different spas. The people being observed changed from day to day. Usually, though, the ethnographer was given strict orders by the person in charge of the spa not to speak to or bother the patrons.

Fieldwork was, methodologically as well as psychologically, a testing process. The process of ethnographic composition involved the *layering* of corporeal experiences,[6] and the ultimate realization that one's own experiences were an important source of information. However, it also required the *splicing* together of very different materials in order to produce an analysis that could explain the cultural organization of the spa experience and what made that experience "work" in some contexts but perhaps not in others. Material from different spas were brought together to establish patterns. Diverse kinds of literature – from glossy magazines and medical reports, to Deleuze's philosophy and Mauss' reflections on magic in Western society – were needed to stitch everything together into a comprehensible text. It was a whole of sorts that, in its own way, was "loyal … to the context" (Pink 2009: 8), but it was a whole that could have looked very different had other materials and sources of theoretical inspiration been used, or if other spas had been attended; a realization which forces us to once again ponder the question of what it means to be loyal to the context or the field, and to bear in mind which perspective they are viewed from.

Depth of Field

Where the project Industrial Cool was driven by the concept itself, the spa project began more as a commissioned assignment in which the ethnographer's work took its point of departure in rather naïve questions as: "What am I studying?" "What's interesting here?" Chance, and perhaps a degree of serendipity, played a seldom acknowledged role as part of the research project. But to the degree that this was so, it is important perhaps not to underestimate the manner in which all of this was shaped, affected, and even guided by such processes as gut feelings and emotional leanings on the part of the ethnographer that were steered less by logical decision making than some form of ethnographic intuition.[7]

While some ethnographic projects seem to be characterized by a form of submersion in the field on the part of the ethnographer, we are struck by the fact that most of the projects we have been engaged in (including the two presented here) have involved serial connections to the places in which we have conducted observations, resulting in a practice that might be referred to as a form of serial ethnography – of immersion and re-immersion in the field. However, as we are arguing, the field is not just out there. The activities the ethnographer engages in during the commute to work, behind the desk (a metaphoric place in need of further problematization in and of itself), and in discussions with colleagues, are all an integral part of the ethnographic process. As Arnd Schneider argues, fieldwork might better be "conceived of as a set of fluctuating relationships between anthropologists and their ethnographic subjects than as a compact and solidly demarcated method" (2008: 173). Rather than just being "out there", fieldwork and the field are very much a part of the ethnographer (this is a point which Wilk illuminates cogently in his contribution to this volume). It is here that we believe it is important to reflect upon what might be understood as ethnographic forms of *depth of field*. Descriptions, no matter how detailed and "thick" they may be, need to be given analytical depth to provide them with significance. Depth of field involves the analytical and compositional processes through which we develop understandings of our observations. It includes non-linear movements between different parts of the field – the spa, the factory, and the ethnographer's desk – but it is also intimately linked to issues of emotions (curiosity, anxiety and exhilaration, e.g.) and how they move the ethnographer who is at times in search of theoretical lenses that may produce a better understanding of the phenomenon at hand, and at others is in search of new materials or methods. Depth of field is, in other words, part of the process we need to imbue upon our students and which will take them from detailed note taking to cultural insightfulness.

Wrapping it up: Openings and Closures

The objective of establishing some form of depth of field is ultimately to bring about understanding; but how do the final products that we compose bring about closure to the questions we have raised and the works we have engaged in? Or, how might they open to new possibilities? The studies named above, like most academic works, resulted in the production of textual presentation (books and articles). However, for a number of ethnographers working outside of the academy, the text is either not enough, or simply not the most appropriate (or desired) form of representation. In these contexts, ethnographic compositions are being remixed to add new dimensions to them that go beyond the written word. And thus, before closing, we would like to turn to the world of applied cultural analysis to further problematize the manner in which we think of ethnographic representations and the compositional forms they may take.

For anthropologists working in applied contexts as consultants, the need to move beyond textual representations has been largely facilitated by the time constraints they work within.[8] The problem here is that most clients do not have the time to read thick descriptions in long manuscripts or to decipher the anthropological conceptual apparatus which we take for granted. In this context many ethnographers working in applied contexts argue that the visualization of ethnographic results can be a particularly effective means of capturing the clients' attention, of engaging them, and reaching them with a specific message (Pink 2004: 10; Sunderland & Denny 2007: 259). As Markus, one of the Scandinavian practitioners we have been in contact with, points out, "Images are evidence. And they are convincing when used correctly to show your viewpoints." He continues, "They can help us focus insights. Images really bring insights across. It's one thing to write about something, another to show it… They (images) can be used to argue, and often they tend to be the best argument. They are very, very powerful." In his line of work, the ethnographic composition often takes its point of departure in rather traditional anthropological methods that include interviewing and participant observation, but it then bifurcates to include visual elements such as posters, PowerPoint images, and video footage, as well as written texts. More than a "thick description" or "representation", the ethnographic composition becomes a *deliverable* (it is "evidence" in Markus' words) that includes the performance of "the presentation". As elements of the composition, the visual materials and the performance of the presentation work to highlight aspects of the ethnography in the hopes of making it stick and to bring about a convincing closure that may itself open the way for new courses of action.

In these contexts, the objectives of the ethnographic composition shift increasingly towards an ambition to facilitate the production of solutions, or possible courses of action.[9] In order to do this Markus has to transform the register of his ethnographic presentation (and please note, in this case his objective – in his own mind – is one of presentation and not representation, although he is well aware of the difference). This switch in register can in some ways be understood as a form of translation, as he converts ideas he has borne with him from an anthropological education and makes them more comprehensible to people with an education in business administration. This is a world in which words such as "intersectionality", "governmentality", or "hermeneutics" are used far less frequently than "development strategies", "bottom line", "user driven innovation", "tailor made logistics" or "stakeholders". But the switch in register that we have observed is more than a translation as the applied ethnographer also has to, at least partially, switch the form through which her or his message is mediated. In some ways this might be understood as a kind of *cultural dubbing* in which not only the language of the message has to be changed, but as part of the process, also the voice. Images, diagrams, and video footage (and the soundtrack that accompanies it) are ethnography, as much as any text they present. But they are also "evidence". The people viewed on the video film are understood to be "informants" or "locals", but in a way they are also "witnesses" who testify and provide evidence. In this sense, the switch in register that we note is one which, in some ways, moves back towards a notion of Science with a capital "S" (cf. Latour 2010): a science capable of providing

more than a representation of reality, but one with hopes of offering something closer to the "truth" to its client or stakeholder.

The switch in register is something which the applied anthropologist may help to illuminate, but it is also something that, as ethnographers in Scandinavia, we are increasingly encountering. For the first time ever, we are accepting students into programs of applied cultural analysis who want to be able to wrap things up with clear conclusions and suggestions for new courses of action and in this way participate in the innovative processes of business, city planning, place marketing, and routes to social action. In order to handle this new situation, we are finding ourselves striving to teach our students the art of composing ethnography and finding appropriate depths of fields. We are also being forced, however, to rethink the manner in which the ethnographies we produce open and close themselves to the problems and questions of the contexts they are generated out of. Some have pointed accusing fingers at applied anthropology and made references to its superficiality (whether defined in terms of all too short periods of ethnographic immersion or tendencies towards "form before content"). We find ourselves trying to rethink, and better understand, the interplay that exists between different compositional processes and techniques and the manner in which they can meet the demands placed upon ethnography in shifting contexts. In arguing for a better understanding of ethnography as composition, we want to call attention to the often unarticulated analytical work that moves the ethnographer from methods to representation. Words such as "superficial", "thick", "thin", etc., might work well to establish professional borders for those who feel threatened, but if we can put such words on hold and focus more on the analytical processes that bind ethnographies together and make them possible, we might be able to better understand how ethnography can be used to meet the expectations of those working in very different contexts in the world we live in today.

The question of what consumers, tourists, and local citizens want and need are important and complicated questions that need to be addressed as an aspect of the development of the cultural economy around us. Ethnography is by no means a cure all, but it has an important role to play here and needs to be investigated further. But doing ethnography implicates much more than making observations, compiling field notes, conducting interviews, and leading in a linear manner to the production of a final text or report. And this is a point we must inculcate upon our students and make clear to those interested in exploring the potential of ethnography in contexts beyond the academy. For, if ethnography is to be invoked to its fullest potential, we must not reduce it to a simple question of methods, and push instead to appreciate it as an activity interlinking a multiplicity of practices, theoretical perspectives, analytical movements, emotional processes, and representational forms.

Ethnographic compositions are, in this sense, more than methods of multi-sitedness. The ethnographies we have briefly discussed above are not just compositions of materials gathered in a series of fieldworks related to ideas about large scale socio-economic processes or systems. The compositional arrangements developing out of these fieldwork contexts are immediately related to the specific assignments or commissions in which they are conducted. Composing ethnography is an emotional endeavor, but it also calls for a pragmatic approach that highlights the ways practical conditions set the stage for and require different forms of outcomes or different compositional forms. We are very accustomed to the demands for textual outcomes in the academy, and we are more than familiar with linear representations of the ethnographic process, but if we move beyond the academy we find a world in which art and science are prepared to approach and challenge one another, and ethnographic compositions are expected to result in performances (called "the pitch" or "final project report") and visuals. Unfortunately, we find ourselves working in a context in which there is a risk that the academy's understanding of the compositional forms that ethnography can take beyond the academy's borders are based more upon preconceived ideas, biases, and misunderstandings than empirically bound knowledge. We would argue for an inquisitive stance to the potential of alternative modes of composing ethnography that exist "out there", and we wonder

how we might be able to reshape our understanding of ethnography if we learn from those working beyond the academy and teach our students to appreciate the forms ethnography can take and the degree to which those forms may be related to the contexts in which they are composed. The key to advancing ethnography in the classroom, and beyond, lies not in a simple focus upon the ultimate form that the ethnographic composition takes, but in a deeper understanding of how the compositional processes looping through methods and materials, as well as theory and analysis, can be combined and worked and expanded upon in different contexts. Indeed, it might even be fruitful to experiment and reflect upon what happens when a compositional arrangement commonly found in one context – let us say, the art gallery or street performance – is introduced to another context such as the classroom or boardroom. It might turn out that "irregularity" can be a productive force, if we dare to take such an open and inquisitive stance.

Notes

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1 This program was founded in 2008, and has consistently attracted several hundred applicants to twenty positions on the Swedish side of the Öresund and as many on the Danish side. In contrast, the introductory course to ethnology in Lund (at the bachelor's degree level) attracts far fewer students (between twenty and thirty per semester, at best). There are many reasons for this discrepancy, and a full explanation of them is beyond the scope of this paper, but as we are arguing, this situation reflects the slightly different context in which ethnography is now being taught (and sought after). Where students once flocked to traditionally oriented courses in ethnology, we currently find, at Lund University at least, that it is the applied approach to ethnography that attracts the bulk of students.

2 It should be noted that while these debates have a slightly longer history in the United States than in Great Britain, France or Germany (see Ervin 2005: 6ff.; Jorgensen 1971; Mills 2006; Pink 2006: 6ff.; Wright 2006, for examples of the discussions of the debates surrounding applied anthropology in these settings), the phenomenon of applied cultural analysis in Sweden is only now congealing into something that might be called a field of its own. And while forms of applied cultural analysis and applied anthropology are viewed with scepticism by some within the academic community, it would be an exaggeration to say that they have been hotly debated – silence or mutterings of disapproval are still the more prevalent forms of critique applied research receives here. Nonetheless, this is a young and growing field whose development coincides with an increasing use of ethnography within the arts. It is this dual bifurcation of ethnography which has attracted our attention and interest.

3 It is worth noting that ethnographic fieldwork from the early days of anthropology had a close kinship to the way natural scientists went on expeditions into their fields to collect and explore nature.

4 The album *IC1 – The Birth of Industrial Cool*, curated together with techno artist Håkan Lidbo included artists such as Apparat, Jay Haze, Rechenzentrum and Scanner.

5 Parallel with his work as a cultural analyst, Willim is active as an artist, using mainly electronic tools of expression. Since the project Industrial Cool he has created a number of works and exhibited worldwide. His portfolio, including works that elaborate on the intersections between art and ethnography can be accessed on: www.robertwillim.com/portfolio/.

6 In speaking of the layering of corporeal experiences here we would draw parallels to the manner in which a musical score (or audio software arrangement) works. Each instrument or channel plays the sounds assigned to it, but it is the accumulated resonance of all the instruments together and the linkage of the separate notes being played which leads to understandings of what all the separate sounds mean for those playing and conducting them as well as listening to them. In the ethnographic context, it is the layering of the senses and their accumulated affect which leads to forms of understanding the field experience.

7 "Ethnographic intuition" is a rather slippery term that pops up occasionally in research seminars but which

remains hard to pin down (Tjora 2008: 431). In part it seems to be based on the idea of ethnographic experience which the individual ethnographer accumulates through years of work. This perspective is itself undoubtedly perpetuated by popular perceptions of intuition as a phenomenon internally bound to the individual. But as the growing literature on emotions, feelings and affect argue, phenomena of affect, such as intuition, may often be generated out of our relation to space around us (Thrift 2000) as well as our interaction with others in that space (Lutz 1998). And here it might be appropriate to reflect upon the manner in which "ethnographic intuition" is culturally derived out of our interaction with others as we receive feedback on drafts of papers, discuss our work with colleagues, and converse with the people we study. George Marcus (2009) argues for a need to reapproach the concept of "collaboration", but he is mostly interested in the relationship between scholars and those being studied. Here we are pointing to the manner in which ethnographies can be understood as collaborative work engaging not only the ethnographer and "informants" but very much related to practices occurring between colleagues and peers. We even want to extend the ideas of collaboration and interaction to the ways researchers encounter a variety of artefacts and objects which all influence the flows and meanderings of the research. We want to stress that these artefacts are not only a demarcated material culture being studied or what we encounter in our empirical investigations but also what we use and what we create ourselves. All kinds of tools from pens and notebooks to word processors, search engines and databases are partaking in the compositions of ethnography. Material such as texts, images and recordings will keep haunting us once we have let them loose in the world. A question worth a great deal of reflection is when these artefacts (these compositions) control us and when we control them.

8 For purposes of brevity, we have primarily opted to concentrate our discussion on the manner in which ethnography is presented, or represented, and "wrapped-up" in consulting contexts. We are aware that these processes are also linked to the slightly different time limits encountered by these practitioners and the methods they use to adapt to them. As others have noted, where traditional anthropological fieldwork is expected to be long in duration, lasting up to a year or more, applied anthropologists find themselves working on projects under much tighter time constraints of a few weeks or months (cf. Sillitoe 2007: 156). The demand for "quick ethnography" has led to the development of strategies of team based ethnography, guerilla ethnography, rapid ethnography, and so on (see Roberts 2006: 86 for a longer list of ethnographic buzz words), in which an anthropologist's managerial skills and an ability to meet deadlines are at least as important as her or his cultural analytical skills. This being said, we will leave a discussion of the connection between methods, perceptions of ethnography, and the representations that come out of them for a future article.

9 Please note, we do not want to fall into an argumentation about words vs. images, a battlefield already filled with too many victims. Instead, by using the composition concept our ambition is to argue for a need to appreciate the manner in which a variety of expressions can be utilized in combination.

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